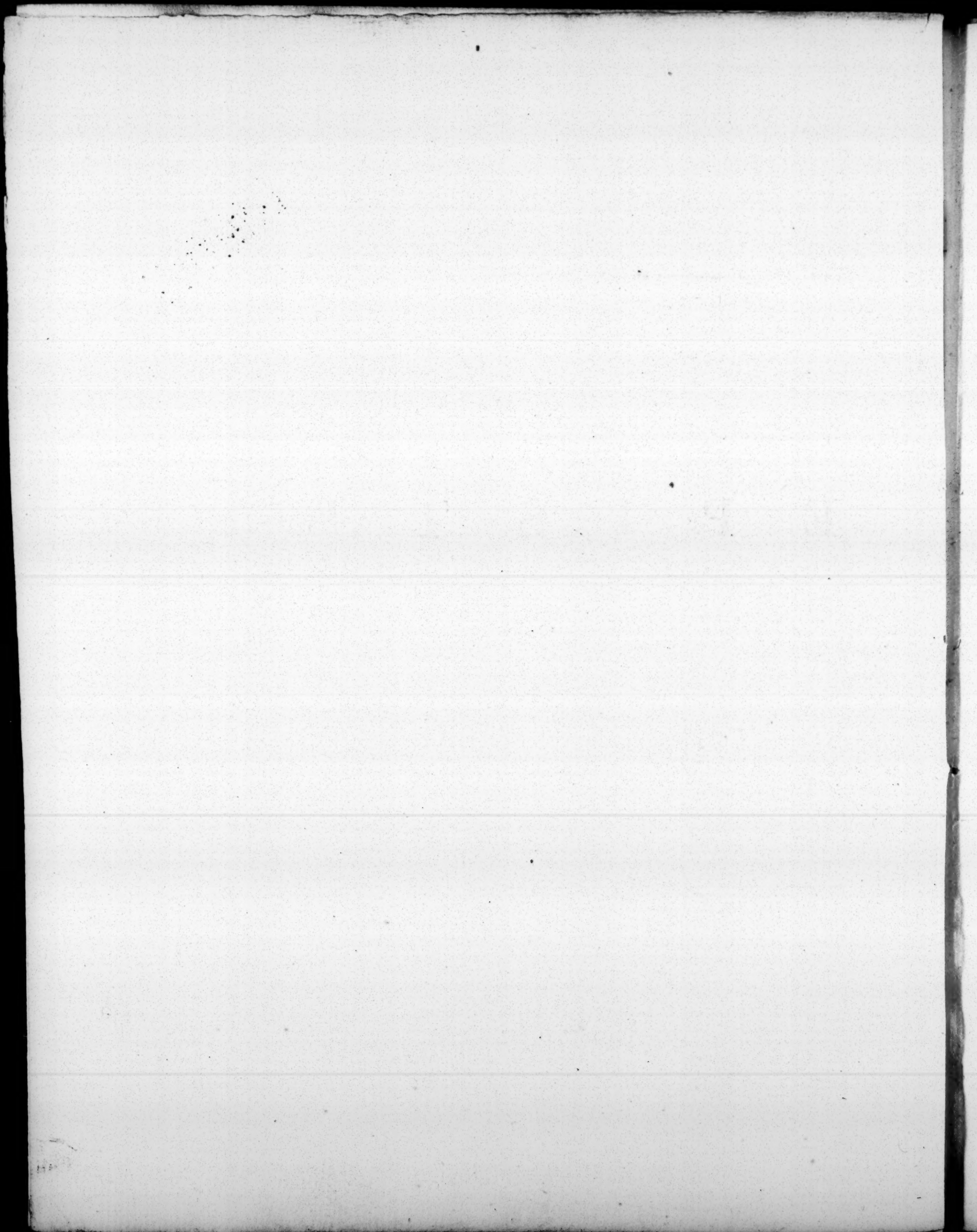

A N
E P I S T L E

O N

Poetical Composition, &c.



A N

E P I S T L E



O N

POETICAL COMPOSITION.

By J A M E S O G D E N,

AUTHOR of the BRITISH LION ROUZ'D.

L O N D O N:

Printed for the AUTHOR ; and Sold by J. HINXMAN, in *Paternoster-Row* ; W. BRISTOW, in *St. Paul's Church-Yard* ; and at the *Golden-Ball*, opposite *St. Clement's Church* in the *Strand*.

MDCCLXII.

E P I S T L E

OF

POETICAL COMPOSITION

BY JAMES OGDEN

866594

AUTHOR OF BRITISH LION ROUSE

L O N D O N :

Printed for the Author, and sold by J. HARRMAN, in Finsbury
Lane; W. BRISTOW, in St. Paul's Church-yard; and at the Golden
Ball, opposite St. Clement's Church in the Strand.

MDCCLXII

Advertisement.

THE following was wrote at the desire of a young Gentleman now at Cambridge, who had all the marks of a promising Genius ; I had then wrote many things for the entertainment of my Friends, without any intent of publishing, and determined to put him in possession of that experience which I had, during several years study, gained in composition.

With this view I sat down, endeavouring to forget whatever had been wrote on the subject ; and knowing how difficult it is for a young author to restrain that irregularity which is visible in the first productions of Genius, it became necessary more particularly to attend to the plan, that the nature of composition might appear, from the manifest dependance of parts on the whole, and the easy transition from one thought to another. This consideration

consideration put me upon being more correct ; and having observed the poverty of thought, so frequently complained of (owing, perhaps, to laziness, but more immediately to a servile imitation of the Antients) I ventured to speak my sentiments with the freedom of an Englishman, and a warmth which may be pardonable, if we consider in how many discoveries and improvements we excel the Antients, and how little interesting their Fables are to the Trade, Commerce, and Connections of *Britain*.

What might not be said in favour of these ? And yet what has been said, either in favour of them, or of those Patriots who have conquered, and go on conquering, in all parts of the Globe ? Are a few coarse songs, scarce surviving a season, all the Trophies which Genius can erect to their memory ?

Such reflections made an impression on me, while I threw out those hints with which the following piece concludes, and gave me an uncommon

mon desire to see the actions of such brave Commanders celebrated, in a manner not unworthy of publick attention : It could not be expected from the inexperience of my pupil ; and as I had not the pleasure of seeing any person of known abilities undertake it, I was determined to attempt it myself, though under manifest disadvantages, as being in the Country, and destitute of a liberal Education ; but this has been amply made up, by the favours of my Friends, and the countenance of persons of Taste, to many of whom I am yet unknown, and take this publick method of acknowledging their favours. Those who may not yet have heard of the Author, or of the longer work which was produced by this, may now have an opportunity if this specimen is favourably received, as the remaining books of the British Lion rouz'd may then be expos'd in the Shops, for the entertainment of the Publick.

Note, *The Poem on the CRUCIFIXION and RESURRECTION, may be had on Good-Friday next, at the same Places.*



O N

POETICAL COMPOSITION.

WHOMEVER will propose, in verse sublime,
 A work which may descend to future time,
Contempt, as *praise* may equally expect;
Merit, when living, often meets neglect,
 And unavailing *praise* attends it's shade.
 Th' *Aonian* steep, with danger first we tread;
 Nor *Phœbus* in his service will retain
 All those who shall the lofty summit gain.

B

'Tis

'Tis only He who studies *Virtue's* lore,
 Reading the volume of Creation o'er,
 Who can effects to hidden causes trace,
 Pursuing Nature thro' her mystic maze;
 He knows what tone to give the founding string,
 And touch each Passion on it's master-spring.

A *Poet*, then, has *Nature* Thee design'd?
 She gives a sensibility of mind;
 Expression prompt, thy meaning to convey,
 As well the clearest, as the shortest way.
 Doubtless Thou art in love with *Solitude* —
 Shunning the gay, the busy multitude;
 When spring invites Thee to sequester'd groves,
 Thine eye, with rapture, o'er the prospect roves —
 Dost thou delight, beside a pleasant stream,
 On smooth-bark'd elms to carve thy *Delia's* name?
 'Tis well — The *Muse* lights up her sacred fires,
 In breasts susceptible of soft desires!
 Feeling her pow'r, in Composition try
 Thy Genius — Grovel not — nor aim too high;

Nor

Nor mind, however rude, thy first essays :
 The thought should rather than the numbers please.

In ev'ry subject, executed well,
 One striking thought should all the rest excel ;
 To which the rest, in order, are referr'd ;
 As thro' the scale a master-note is heard :
 Polish it up, and keep it still in view —
 Not more the needle to the magnet true.

A worthless subject, or indecent thought,
 Thy paper blurs, how high soever wrought :
 Leave such, I charge Thee, by the love of fame ;
 A gen'rous sportsman nothing hunts, but game ;
 Nor let it ever enter in thy breast,
 A *Friend*, or *Truth*, to barter for a jest.
 Fly scandal as the plague—a *Gossip* muse,
 Is worse than any savage bear let loose.
 Such themes, too often, to discredit bring
 Poesy, acknowleg'd once a sacred thing:

Then:

Then be thy subject worthy her regard——

Nor let a serpent with a dove be pair'd.

What subjects sayst thou? Mark the starry host,
 See mountains, with their tops in *Æther* lost!
 In summer parch'd, in winter white with snow;
 Hark! fountains, down their sides, meand'ring flow,
 Now, thro' their rocky channels haste away,
 Or course the fertile champain tow'rd the sea;
 To which each seems as if by instinct led,
 Time immemorial, thro' his oozy bed.
 See *Nature* now awakes; at ev'ry root,
 The dormant principles of herb, flow'r, fruit!
 Already now the sprouting is begun!
 The flow'rs, already, op'ning to the sun,
 Vary their curious tints from strong to faint——
 What pencil can with such precision paint?

Is *Nature*, with returning energy,
 That quickens all things, lib'ral now to thee?
 Some pleasing thought, or rural object take;
 And, let warm *Fancy* short excursions make;

As

As when the larkling tries his new-fledg'd wings,
 Ere out of sight, into the air he springs —
 Short fallies best the readers entertain;
 That thou art tedious let me ne'er complain:
 What will it signify, if cold and dull,
 To jingle on, and versify by rule?
 I laugh to see the flattern *Muse* perplex'd —
 Scarce knowing what stale thought to dish up next.

Yet *Fancy* sometimes starts a lively thought,
 Which heighten'd up, and finish'd as it ought,
 A picture may exhibit, at full length;
Grace recommending, *Ease* relieving Strength!
 Now, as a bird expatiates o'er the Field,
 And choice materials culls, her nest to build,
 Labour the subject, nor thy purpose leave,
 Till ev'ry feature shall a likeness have;
 Summon what aid each science can afford;
 Polish each period, value every word;
 Sweetly the numbers varying all the while;
 And ever to the matter, suit the stile.

The whole, when finish'd, carefully revise;
 Or let some friend, with freedom, criticise;
 What if he strikes out, here and there, a line—
 Enlarge, contract, new model the *design*;
 This sentiment will bear another touch;
 Too little may be said, often too much;
 Those lines are flat; that passage will require
 A little soft'ning; this, a little fire.

Fire, is of verse the strong and active soul,
 Which warms, enlivens, and inspires, the whole:
Fancy, like *Vulcan*, labours at the forge,
 Till wheels, self turn'd, the golden figures urge;
 If *judgment* yet there lacks, to govern these,
That rants unmeaning, *this* but wanton plays:
 To make a perfect piece, 'tis requisite
 That *Fire*, and *Fancy*, and sound *Judgment* meet.

Few precepts may in any art suffice;
Genius, self-taught, above those few will rise!
 Read such as have in poetry excell'd,
 True to the mirror *Nature* ever held;

Acknow-

Acknowleg'd principles from them receive,
 But never blindly into systems give:
 Suppose the *Antients* claim a precedence,
 For just design, and native eloquence;
 Yet *Homer*, *Virgil*, *Horace*, when they writ,
 Ne'er dreamt of that monopoly in wit
 Their works, by long prescription, now possess:
Milton strikes most, to them alluding less;
 So much the more, when true poetic rage
 He catches—glancing at the *Sacred page*.

Thy *Muse*, with profit here her vein employs,
 And gathers flowers the growth of *Paradise*.
 Or *themes* un Sung, the *Antients* never knew,
 Invite thee, with the enterprizing few,
 To leave the beaten track, and strike out something new!
Genius is cramp'd, however on the wing,
 Struggling, she would exert her innate spring;
 So long as that same wretched taste prevails,
 To fetch from *Greece* and *Rome*, exploded tales.

Which

Which of those *Heroes*, braving winds and seas,
 Like *Drake*, or *Anson*, law th' *Antipodes*!
 One vessel held the choicest youth of *Greece*,
 To bring in triumph home the golden fleece!
 Ten Years could all the *Argive Kings* employ,
 Leagu'd with auxiliar *Gods* to level *Troy*!
 Yet when could *Simois*, or *Xancthus*' streams,
 Boast such a freight as *Severn*, or the *Thames*!
 Now *Virgil*, by each farmer is out-till'd ;
Jove's Eagle now to *Britain's Hawke* must yield ;
Amberst's firm Soul no toil nor Danger shakes,
 Victorious o'er that *Hydra* of the lakes.

But who like *Wolfe* could meditate the blow——
 With courage and with conduct temper'd so?
 To keep the bolt suspended, till it might
 With all his country's well-tim'd vengeance light:
 Lo! *Saunders*, in the service volunteer!
 Did *Howe* or *Keppel* e'er shew signs of fear?
 Troop-raising *Townshend's* acts are yet unsung!
Boscawen thunders, yet the lyre's unstrung!

His brazen *Bulls*, with their tremendous roar,
 The vast *Atlantic* shake, from shore to shore.
 Westward, the *Gaul*, and the *Canadian* fell,
 Unite in vain our *Worthies* to repel :
 Southward, the tawny *African* receives
 The yoke—presenting gums, gold-duft, and slaves :
 While *Clive* pulls down and sets up *Indian Kings*
 East, where *Rome's* Eagle never stretch'd her wings.



